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ST. PAUL, MN -- Five hearing protection devices from 3M have been added to the U.S. AbilityOne Commission's Federal Procurement List (FPL), to help military personnel who are often exposed to excessive noise levels.

3M has a strong commitment to hearing conservation and will work with New Dynamics Corporation to protect warriors and workers from noise-induced hearing loss. As part of a co-branding agreement, New Dynamics Corporation will assemble, package and distribute the 3M devices through its government and commercial contracts, providing employment opportunities for more than 20 employees with and without disabilities.

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"Military personnel are exposed to excessive noise levels during combat and training on a variety of land, air and sea missions," said Walter Pawlowski, vice president of Business Development, New Dynamics Corporation. "This noise exposure has led many personnel to experience hearing loss and tinnitus, which is currently the number-one service-related disability for veterans."

Tinnitus, often referred to as "ringing in the ears," and noise-induced hearing loss can be caused by a one-time exposure to hazardous impulse noise, or by repeated exposure to excessive noise over an extended period of time.

The hearing protection devices being added to the Federal procurement list include a series of 3M Combat Arms Earplugs and the 3M E-A-R Yellow Skull Screws earplugs. Combat Arms Earplugs provide hear-through capabilities, which enable military personnel to hear low-level sounds, such as footsteps or spoken commands, while protecting against damaging impulse noise from explosions or firearms. Yellow Skull Screws earplugs provide high-attenuation, easy insertion and compliance with Foreign Objects and Debris (FOD) requirements in proximity with military aircraft and flight lines.

The Combat Arms Earplug is made of a washable plastic, has a triple-flange eartip to keep it in place, and features a rocker switch that is operated without removing the earplug. Military personnel can adjust the rocker with a quick "click" depending on the type of protection required for the mission. When it's in the open or "weapons fire" position, sound can travel through the sound channel filter into the ear. For noisy environments that don't require a hear-through listening capability, such as being near helicopters, troop carriers or generators, the rocker can be closed for "constant protection."

The 3M products were added to the procurement list by the U.S. AbilityOne Commission, which was established as an independent Federal agency by the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act. The Commission administers the AbilityOne Program, which currently provides employment opportunities for more than 50,000 people who are blind or have significant disabilities. The AbilityOne Program uses the purchasing power of the Federal government to buy products and services from nonprofit agencies nationwide dedicated to training and employing individuals with disabilities.

New Dynamics Corporation works closely with SourceAmerica, a national nonprofit agency whose mission is to create employment opportunities for people with significant disabilities by securing Federal contracts through the AbilityOne Program.

"People with disabilities are the nation's largest untapped labor force and nearly 80 percent of these individuals do not have jobs," said SourceAmerica President and CEO Bob Chamberlin. "It is our mission to help secure work for people with disabilities, and it is particularly fitting that we work with New Dynamics and 3M as their hearing protection products and services can help reduce the number of hearing-related disabilities within the military and other at-risk populations."

"3M has 40 years of experience developing innovative hearing protection products," said Doug Moses, Military Market Development, Occupational Health & Environmental Safety, 3M. "We look forward to applying our rich history with hearing protection products in support of New Dynamics and SourceAmerica to equip the U.S. Armed Forces with devices that allow them to hear mission critical communication, while helping reduce the risk of developing tinnitus and noise-induced hearing loss."



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